DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 195 184 HE 013 274

AUTHOR Donavan, Bruce
TITLE Securing Valid Information for Evaluation of Job Performance of the University Faculty.
PUB DATE [80]
NOTE 11p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Alcoholism: *College Faculty: *Drinking: *Evaluation Criteria: Faculty College Relationship: *Faculty Evaluation: Faculty Workload: Higher Education: Teacher Alienation: Teacher Attitudes: *Teacher Behavior: Teacher Effectiveness: Teacher Morale: Teacher Responsibility: Teacher Role

ABSTRACT

Approaches to obtaining valid information for evaluating faculty and the issue of alcoholism and job performance are addressed. Among the complications to this undertaking is the existence of an invalid self-perception on the part of faculty that they are not employees of the institution, and a tolerance among faculty for deviance or eccentricity. It is suggested that this tolerance encourages detrimental drinking behavior. The difficulty of specifying the job responsibilities of faculty members and what constitutes an adequate job performance has concerned faculty evaluators. It is suggested that lists of objective, verifiable, and mutually established criteria for job effectiveness be developed. Among the changes that may reduce job stress and possibly prevent chemical dependency and other forms of self-destructive defensive behavior are the following: providing precise and well advertised job descriptions: accepting mid-career changes and allowing for individual adjustment to this transition: and realizing that early tenure appointments may be accompanied by an early peaking of a career. Efforts to reduce job stress and strengthen collegiality rest upon an open acknowledgment of departmental and individual strengths and expectations (and, by implication, weaknesses). When problems remain, self-referral must be encouraged through health education. (SW)

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"SECURING VALID INFORMATION FOR EVALUATION OF JOB PERFORMANCE OF THE UNIVERSITY FACULTY"

Bruce G. Dennison
NOV 1980
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Reference to Roman = Roman, P.M., "Employee Alcoholism and Assistance Programs: Adapting an Innovation for College and University Faculty", Journal of Higher Education, 1980, Vol. 51, No. 2, pp. 135-149.

It is a particular pleasure for me to have the opportunity to discuss my subject with you today. I am not a professional evaluator, by which I mean to imply not that as a professional I have never evaluated the performance of others but rather to suggest that I have not had extensive formal training in the theory and practice of evaluation. Indeed, as a classroom teacher, as a member of a variety of faculty committees, as the chairman of an academic department, and as a dean, I have spent considerable time in evaluating one matter or one individual or another. My experience with evaluation, at least loosely defined, is, in short, considerable; but I hope you will bear with me if I display a certain innocence in approaching the technical language of your profession It may be well to note, as gackground and context for the remarks which will follow, that I am at present a University professor in the Classics and as well a dean charged with special responsibility for faculty and staff, as well as students, who have problems with alcohol and other drugs, i.e., chemical dependency. It is in this second role that I approach you, though my remarks, as will be clear, draw on my experience as faculty member and chairman and, indeed, as alcoholic. I will focus most clearly on the issue of alcoholism and the job performance of faculty though my comments will very likely have meaning for other social problems and other organizational or, more correctly, occupational groups.

According to reliable estimates, alcoholism ranks as the United State's third major public health problem, after problems of heart disease and cancer. Most individuals are surprised by the high incidence of alcoholism and on reflection their surprise is small cause for wonder. Problems with alcohol are highly stigmatized and little discussed. The advertisements

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which dot our printed publications and pock our radio and TV presentations make clear that in American society drinking is very highly correlated imagistically with success, good times, good looks, good skin, and every other good thing in life. The ads encourage us to get on with the fine art of imbibing to such an extent that most of us who do drink learn early that to fail at this activity, willfully or not, with unhappy legal or merely personal or familial difficulties, is undesirable, is a negative thing, and indeed constitutes a form of social deviance. As a result, individual drinkers learn early to deny their most minimal problems with drinking and the rest of us learn to avoid these same difficulties in conversation and perhaps in observation. One might think that this denial/avoidance mechanism would not hold in academia where "we should know better" but this is hardly the case. Like other segments of society, academia has its own mythology on the glamour in the need for drinking. Living as we do on the frontiers of knowledge we need, we faculty, the surcease which bourbon alone can provide. We have but limited means and must entertain ourselves with a little bottle of adequate red wine. And exhausted as faculty we need the nurture nightly of a cocktail or two or four to rest our weary minds, exhausted by keeping up with the young. Such rhetoric neatly fences in the academic drinker.

Certain wise academics within the last ten years, in company with others in industry, developed a heightened awareness of alcohol problems and the toll they exact among faculty. Along with this awareness developed a desire to combat the problem. Academic institutions developed policies on alcoholism among their faculty in which they absolved the drinker of responsibility for destructive alcoholic behavior and urged, permitted hospitalization and milder forms of treatment for these difficulties with impunity. The effectiveness of these policies rested initially on the willingness of chairpersons and academic deans to confront colleagues and suggest the need and

appropriateness of some form of treatment. Deans and chairpersons, not without good reason, have balked at this additional charge in their duties. As a result another model of program with a similar goal was developed, the "Employee Assistance Program Model". In such programs it was recognized that "personal problems other than alcohol abuse may underlie deteriorating job performance..." Chairpersons, like supervisors in the industrial counterparts of these programs, maintained responsibility "for monitoring job performance and attendance and for confronting subordinates whose performance deterioration is not obviously linked to some factor in the work situation; while these are typical supervisory expectations, it is important to emphasize their applicability to all types of problem subordinates, especially when alcohol abuse is suspected...by making performance the primary consideration, it becomes evident that administrators' managerial expertise is more pivotal in such programs than their medical or diognostic knowledge." (Roman, pp. 136, 137, 141) The theory behind the development of these programs seems attractive in that faculty, as non-medical professionals, are rescued from dealing directly with the mess of a highly stigmatized disorder among close working colleagues and, very often, friends. However, the basic problem is compounded. Chairpersons and deans realize that alcohol problems are still a concern in this performance-based, evaluation-focused operation and at the same time the crucial importance is highlighted, quite apart from the question of, detecting alcoholism, of monitoring a colleagues performance. Each problem - that of alcoholism and that of professional competency - retains its difficulties. Although the faculty member is apparently spared the role of medical diagnostician, the emphasis on the role of evaluator of professional competence becomes even more - doubly - crucial. Resistance to this evaluation activity is of a different quality, though not of different strength, than resistance to diagnosing directly problems of alcohol misuse.

As evaluators of the performance of their colleagues, faculty are faced with a battery of problems, or situations which have been perceived as problematic. In the first instance there exists an invalid self-perception on the part of faculty that they are indeed not employees of the institution which they serve and from which they draw their salaries. On the most simple level faculty resist being styled "employees". There is also a mental attitude whereby faculty perceive themselves, in some ways, in some instances, as "self-employed": it has been well remarked that this is erroneous, that faculty are indeed "supervised", at whatever distance, with whatever delicacy. They are not what a colleague at another institution refers to as "the visiting royalty of the academic set". And yet those who evaluate and judge their colleagues must recall and be reminded that faculty are indeed "employees", and not only when they come to claiming well-deserved fringe benefits.

The difficulties inherent in this self-perception are exacerbated by something which may best be labeled "academic chic" whereby faculty achieve greater popularity, notoriety, and acclaim as they become more unique in their style, their bearing and performance, more eccentric. At times this "chic" is encouraged by an appeal, not always appropriate, to "academic freedom" whereby deviance is tolerated, and subtly or not so subtly encouraged. This tolerance for deviance is important, if not always appropriate, but it makes more difficult the application of uniform standards of performance which, I suspect, most lay evaluators, at least, believe necessary for comparative judgments. Flamboyance can make any number of vices.

A sub-species of this tolerance encourages the very drinking behavior I consider pathological. More than one faculty member has spoken to me of the need to drink and the need to tolerate others who cope with the stresses of their academic situation by self medication through drink. This mythology further

undercuts the process of evaluation. And of course this can be seen, to go back to where we began, as a reaction to or realization of social stigma.

Another set of concerns which may trouble a faculty evaluator focuses on the question of just what a faculty member's "job" is or what constitutes an adequate "job performance". Are there certain hours that a faculty member can be required to spend on campus or in his office, available for students or simply while conducting research? Can the faculty member not work at home? What is the "normal" course load in a department or division of a large university? How much scholarly productivity can be expected - how many reviews? how many articles? how many books? how many invited papers? How many office hours should a faculty member hold? How many hours of committee work make up an appropriate contribution to "community service".. How does one balance service to the community at large as opposed to the service expected on campus? What of attendance at departmental lectures and symposia? All these are legitimate variables and for the faculty member who is reluctant to judge a peer firmly (to avoid the term "harshly"), there are abundant and quasi-legitimate avenues of escape.

If there are imprecise definitions of a faculty member's "job", there are similar difficulties in the matter of a chairmanship. Here, there is the added difficulty that the incentive to serve as a "good" chairperson is not very great. In some instances there is a stipend for assuming this liturgy; in other instances the chairmanship is seen as a shared task to be rotated among colleagues, <u>without</u> additional remuneration. Quite often the chairperson, who stands half-way between his colleagues and the academic dean, who is the department representative on one occasion and a representative of the administration at another, is without real power or effectiveness. Real decisions seem to be made by his administrative superior or perhaps through private negotiations between his departmental colleagues and that same dean.

An extension of this same situation applies in the matter of academic deans themselves, those individuals who often times have ascended through the ranks from faculty member to chairperson to senior administrator. Analogous to the situation which pertains between faculty and chairperson is that which holds not only between the dean and his chairmanly colleagues but between the dean and the faculty as a group. The network of friends is strong and the task of judgment the mor difficult for it.

One final comment is in order. In the guild-like world of academia, collegiality is generally a highly espoused virtue, however short we may fall of the ideal mark. This aspiration to collegiality, perhaps more clearly defined as lack of social distance between "supervisor" and "employee" - the mere fact of friendship among colleagues - these too corrupt in many instances the process of evaluation. This year's chairperson, after all, will be next year's subordinate; and how stiff can one expect the judgment to be on an individual in this situation?

As remarked, how can one expect an evaluator in this complex context to deal effectively with judgments of professional performance and possible referral for alcohol problems, implicitly or explicitly defined?

I am not the first, of course, to point out these problems. Others have remarked the difficulties of both these procedures, though not perhaps as I have, as two sides of a rather difficult and yet perhaps divisible issue. How can this apparent dilemma be resolved? Acknowledging the institutional difficulties which I have mentioned, some have suggested that the locus of concern for problems of chemical dependency be shifted from a departmental base to the arena of a faculty member's discipline, to which, it is frequently claimed, faculty owe an allegiance prior to that paid to his or her

department. Under this plan committees for referral and education would be established within the wide variety of professional associations. My primary reservation about this plan is that it should suplement and not replace concern which should more appropriately be institutionally based. No, I think that both issues - evaluation and diagnosis of ill health - should be dealt with within the faculty member's home institution. The two issues, however, should be separated and kept more sharply distinct so that the complexities of one do not magnify the difficulties of the other. This is not to say, however, that the theoretical bases for consideration of the two issues are not similar.

The concept of "intertwined fates" has recently been proposed alongside the collegiality of which academics tout so proudly. The "intertwining" is meant to suggest the mutual dependence of the members of an academic department. "Intertwining", in short, is a facing of the fact that all members of a department are involved in a mutually dependent endeavor where each member of a department benefits from the peculiar strengths and may suffer from the peculiar weaknesses of a colleague. "An administrative strategy of creating 'intertwined fates' may come to enhance faculty performance as well as the liklihood of an effective peer referral system in academic settings...Thus if an academic department received a travel allowance or a sum for raises based upon the total performance of the group, the liklihood of individual concern over the performance of other department members may increase sharply." (Roman, p. 145) This language sounds almost brutal. In fact, this operation has in many situations been true for a long time though very rarely is it candidly remarked. To the honest observer it is apparent that in most situations one departmental faculty member will enjoy and be successful at advising; another will enjoy the classroom and even ask to teach courses additional to those required; yet another may enjoy research in a more cloistered and private existence; and so on through a rather large group.

Despite the lack of balance of talents in any one individual, all individuals may contribute to a balanced and smoothly functioning organization. It is important to recognize this dependence, this corporate cohesiveness and relaxation of expectation of equal talents from all members, and to state it clearly to all members of any one department. The allowance of imbalance in individuals will very likely raise departmental morale and the department and institution as a whole may well prosper. Best of all, each individual can be given a sense of what is expected. In this way each individual may realistically and with greater equanimity expect assessments based on self-defined criteria of performance. In such a situation the onus of checking on a colleague's performance may very well be lightened. (Incidentally, such a system would allow for discussion of those obvious often embarrassing differences among individuals which raised the thorny questions of "merit" and "worth".)

When a colleague is deficient the cause of that deficiency may well be a matter of chemical dependency or any other difficulty. There is no thought, however, that assessment of performance need uncover such a difficulty. Its discovery will be coincidental.

Rather than fuse into one task two functions of monitoring job performance and creating referrals for chemical dependency, it seems best to deal with this second issue by encouraging individuals to look after their own health (and by extension that of their colleagues) and to help them realize that the stigma which may inhibit their self-referral for assistance is ill-deserved. Education in chemical dependency, for the total university community, departments, and for individuals and their families, will be important components of this activity. Such an airing of the issues may very well encourage individuals to avoid the later stages of chemical dependency and to seek help earlier in their lives. In any event it is a

misuse of job monitoring to piggyback upon it an expectation of referral for ill health.

What I suggest, in short, is an open declaration of an individual's and an organization's strengths and expectations (and, by implication, weaknesses). Lists of objective, verifiable, mutually established criteria for job effectiveness must be drawn up. Recognition of individual talents must also include recognition of certain changes of direction which may appear during one's career. We must realize and accept fully the fact of mid-career changes as they become more fashionable and allow for the individual's adjustment to this transition. We must also realize that for many academics who receive tenure early, such a granting of tenure may accompany an early peaking of a career. We must look to the later, and less productive periods with eyes wide open and invite these individuals to consider new professional concerns. Young junior faculty, as has been suggested, must receive realistic advice and support during their early hectic years at work. All of these efforts rest on an open acknowledgment of departmental and individual strengths and the highest form of collegiality, which is helpful to the functioning of the institution. Once this acknowledgment is made many of the difficulties in job assessment may be eased and the process of obtaining valid information for evaluation for job performance of university faculty be made less tortuous. Such a change can only be positive, especially when so many campuses have relatively young, high-tenured, steady-state faculty with small opportunity for job mobility. Precise and well advertised job descriptions will ease job monitoring, ease faculty anxiety, and increase effectiveness of the institution. By these changes some job stress will inevitable be eliminated, itself a helpful step in the prevention of chemical dependency and other forms of self-destructive defensive behavior. Where such problems remain, self-referral must be encouraged through health education worked out without improper reliance on the already difficult task of monitoring job efficiency.

THE IDEA OF A UNIVERSITY: A CONFERENCE

Wednesday, November 19, 1980

Andrews Dining Room

4:00 - 4:15 Registration

4:15 - 4:30 Media presentation

4:30 - 5:00 Plenary session: Ideas of a University
1) The University in Search of Truth--Eric Widmer
2) The University as a Pluralist Society--Rick Marker
3) The University as a Community--Harriet Sheridan

5:00 - 6:45 Workshops (4 groups)
The Things That Keep us Apart: Race, Sex, Class, Religion, Function

7:00 - 8:00 Dinner

8:00 - 9:00 Ways to Reconciliation. Crystal Room

9:00 - Night Owls' Discussion and Beverages, Woolley 125